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ABSTRACT

Based on the argument that (contrary to critical opinion) the musicians in the various bands associated with Bosstown Sound were indeed talented, cohesive individuals and that the bands' lack of renown was partially a result of ill-treatment by record companies and the press, this paper traces the development of the Bosstown Sound from its beginnings in the nightclubs of Boston in 1967 to its end in 1969. In addition, the paper provides complete discographies, including critical commentary, of records produced by bands associated with the Bosstown Sound. The bands of the Bosstown Sound include: The Apple Pie Motherhood Band, The Bagatelle, The Beacon Street Union, Bo Grumpus, Eagle, Earth Opera, Eden's Children, Sure Looks Real, The Ill Wind, Jolliver Arkansaw, Orpheus, Phluph, Puff, and Ultimate Spinach. (Thirty-three references are attached.) (ARH)

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The Bosstown Sound

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The Bosstown Sound

In some ways the Bosstown Sound is the pop music equivalent of the Edsel--a notorious marketing effort that failed. However, the Edsel at least has nostalgia going for it, is well known, and is often recalled fondly or at least with whimsy--whereas the Bosstown Sound has been overlooked by most critics and historians of pop music. The few writers who have taken note of the Bosstown Sound have, by and large, relegated it to the trash heap of pop music history.

I do not wish to contradict the conventional view that the Bosstown Sound (sometimes called simply the Boston Sound) was a cynically conceived promotional gimmick designed to "hitch-hike" on the success of the San Francisco Sound. Nor would I dispute that the Bosstown Sound was a failure from a commercial standpoint. I do, however, wish to refute two corollary assumptions--(1) the notion that the Bosstown Sound was entirely the creation of ad men and that, musically speaking, there was no such thing as a Bosstown Sound; and (2) the view that the records of the Bosstown bands were, as a group, somehow musically inferior or lacking in authenticity compared to practically anything else released in the 1960s.

I will begin by reviewing the few words others have written about the Bosstown Sound. This will provide an overview of the historical record and a picture of the prevailing critical attitude toward the Bosstown Sound. Following this, I will present a survey of the bands and records associated with the Bosstown Sound. The survey will reveal that the Bosstown Sound had distinctive musical characteristics; that it was therefore something of a genre (albeit a multifarious one), not merely a gaggle of bands united only under a marketing slogan; and that the "genre" as a whole, and the records individually, were less pretentious and more musically ambitious than critics and historians have noted. My aim in making these arguments is not to place Ultimate Spinach and their cohorts on a pedestal, but to rescue them from their undeserved place

on the trash heap.

Bosstown as Scene and Pseudo-Scene

What eventually became known as the Bosstown Sound existed, at least in rudimentary form, as early as June 1967. The first issue of Avatar, a Boston underground newspaper, carried an ad for the Boston Tea Party (53 Berkeley St.), a psychedelic club which had opened the previous winter. The ad promoted the appearance of the Hallucinations and the Ill Wind, two Bosstown Sound bands, on June 16 and 17.[1]

The Tea Party was the main outlet for local psychedelic/underground bands, and also for like minded bands visiting from other cities, including the Velvet Underground, the Peanut Butter Conspiracy, Lothar and the Hand People, and Canned Heat. Other Boston psychedelic clubs included the Crosstown Bus (337 Washington St., Brighton Center, Brighton [an area within Boston]), the Rabbit (Rte. 138, Taunton [a town about 30 miles south of Boston]), the Psychedelic Supermarket, the Unicorn, the Catacombs, and the Ark. The Club 47 (47 Palmer St., Harvard Square) occasionally featured Bosstown bands but was primarily a folk and blues club until it closed in April 1968.

The 47 is fondly remembered as a mainstay in Boston's very active folk music scene during the mid 1960s. This era in Boston's musical history is lovingly described in von Schmidt and Rooney's Baby, Let Me Follow You Down.[2] Major figures associated with the Boston folk scene include Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Richard and Mimi Fariña, the Kweskin Jug Band and its offshoots, John Sebastian, Tom Rush, Taj Mahal, the Chambers Brothers, Eric von Schmidt, Eric Andersen, and many others. Avatar had a fairly strong folk orientation and was in many ways a propaganda vehicle for the personality cult centered around folk singer and communal family leader Mel Lyman.

The folk scene is important as a musical backdrop for the Bosstown Sound,

but there seem to have been surprisingly few direct connections between what might be called the folk subculture and the psychedelic subculture. Peter Rowan, David Grisman, and John Nagy were veterans of the folk scene who formed the Bosstown band Earth Opera. Peter Wolf moved from folk to a Bosstown band called the Hallucinations. These are the only significant folk-Bosstown connections I have been able to find. Interestingly, Rowan, Grisman, and Wolf appear also to be among the few musicians from the Bosstown Sound who have gone on to highly successful musical careers. Rowan played with Seatrain in the early 1970s, then as one of the Rowan Brothers, who released five LPs between 1972 and 1982. Grisman is renowned as a session mandolinist. Wolf is best known as the lead singer of the J. Geils Band. Stephen Bladd, drummer for the J. Geils Band, was also a member of the Hallucinations. Jeff Baxter, a member of Ultimate Spinach for their last album, later played with Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers.

If there is little connection between Bosstown and the folk scene, there is even less between Bosstown and the many Boston-area bands from the mid 1960s who would now be called "punk." These include the Remains, the Barbarians, the Lost, the Rockin' Ramrods (aka the Ramrods), Teddy and the Pandas, the Improper Bostonians, Monday's Mondos, the Wildweeds (an early incarnation of NRBQ), the North Atlantic Invasion Force (aka the N.A.I.F.), the Rising Storm, and Georgie Porgie and the Cry Babies.[3] Many of these bands are from a slightly earlier period than the Bosstown Sound. Still, one would expect some carry-over of personnel, yet I have been able to find only one--Lee Mason, drummer for the Lost, was the leader of the Bosstown band the Bagatelle. Further, Teddy and the Pandas' only album was released in 1968--the year of the Bosstown Sound--yet I have not seen this band mentioned in any discussion of the Bosstown Sound, other than as a punk forerunner.

The fragmentation of the local music scene(s) was apparently one of the major reasons why the unifying label "Bosstown Sound" was resented. Paul Williams was one of the critics who emphasized the diversity of the Boston bands:

> [T]here isn't any common consciousness in the Boston rock scene--there isn't even any Boston rock scene. There are good groups coming out of that area (the Bagatelle, Earth Opera), but there isn't the spiritual unity that San Francisco had back when everybody played the Avalon or the Fillmore and did benefits together and looked to the [Jefferson] Airplane and the [Grateful] Dead as ad hoc leaders of the scene (they were the first to be known in the town, the first to be known in the country, the first to get contracts etc., and most of the groups cheerfully followed their leads). Boston groups are related to each other only in a geographical sense, and even that is tenuous. And even if there were a real Boston scene analogous to the togetherness that existed in the Bay Area, that fact would not be especially important. It would be very nice, it might even mean that we could look forward to good things coming out of Boston (and I think we can, by the way), but it wouldn't mean there was necessarily a Boston sound or that any group out of that area would be <u>a priori</u> worth listening to. MGM's release of three rather sickly albums to a fanfare of bibble about the "Bosstown Sound" is a depressing and unsuccessful hype, despite what may have been seemingly sensible plans and reasonably good intentions.[4]

There does indeed seem to have been a lack of "spiritual unity" among Boston rock bands (in contrast to the togetherness of the folk crowd). The main problem apparently was the lack of viable rock clubs before the Boston Tea Party. In addition, it may be significant that many of the members of the Bosstown bands were college students and not natives Bostonians. A similar

situation prevailed among the folkies, but that scene had more time to develop into an effective melting pot--whereas some of the Bosstown bands didn't even meet each other until they toured nationally.[5] Also missing were the local and regional record labels often associated with a healthy and developing rock scene. Several such labels had sprung up around the earlier punk movement, but the Bosstown Sound was dominated entirely by national labels (especially MGM, but also ABC and Elektra).

These points notwithstanding, Williams's contrasting of San Francisco and Boston appears to be somewhat overblown. The Boston Tea Party apparently served much the same function as the Avalon and Fillmore ballrooms, and was, according to one account, a large financial success during the heyday of Bosstown.[6] The San Francisco rock scene produced a multitude of bands, some of whom were no more in tune with any overall local unity than were the most isolated of the Bosstown bands.

Moreover, San Francisco rock was no less vulnerable to hype than was Bosstown. The notorious overpromotion of Moby Grape is a case in point. In a similar vein, San Francisco rock was a major ingredient in the hippie myth, which was subjected to so much national hype that locals finally staged an event (yet more hype) declaring the Death of Hippie.

In both San Francisco and Boston, the hype problem was but one dimension of a larger phenomenon, common at that time, of rock culture at odds with record companies. Among San Francisco bands, for example, Jefferson Airplane was constantly at war with their record company, RCA. In Boston, MGM's naming, sponsorship, and packaging of the "Bosstown Sound" produced an immediate and strong backlash, both in the local underground press (Avatar) and in the developing national rock press (Crawdaddy, Rolling Stone).

In Avatar, a review of a concert by Country Joe and the Fish contrasted

that band with "WBZ's and MGM's Boston Sound," which was seen as "derivative" and lacking in "honesty and originality."[7] In a later issue, a review of a Doors concert similarly found the Electric Organ, "one of the new Boston Sound groups" which opened the concert, incompetent and "highly indicative of MGM's fictitious Boston Sound."[8] Elsewhere, Rusty Marcus, identified (apparently misidentified) as bassist with the Bosstown band Eden's Children, is quoted as saying: "Boston could never support a music scene. You can't enjoy yourself if your body's sick, and Boston's sick, physically, psychologically sick. . . . [W]e're glad we're not just lumped together with the rest of the Boston Sound. [At that time, Eden's Children was the only Boston band signed to a label other than MGM.] I mean, MGM's trying to buy its way onto the charts."[9]

Crawdaddy printed the critical Paul Williams piece quoted above, while Rolling Stone published an acerbic review by Boston native Jon Landau. In the summer of 1967, Landau had published an enthusiastic article in Crawdaddy about some of the new Boston bands.[10] The Bosstown hype provoked him to castigate what he saw as exploitation of an emerging rock scene. He was particularly hard on the debut records of two of the initial MGM Bosstown bands--Ultimate Spinach and the Beacon Street Union. The Spinach album was "at best, pretentious." The Eyes of the Beacon Street Union included "very inept original material which is sung and produced very poorly."[11] These bands (along with Orpheus, the other MGM band included from the beginning in the Bosstown promotion) were not even mentioned in Landau's Crawdaddy article and, based on club ads in available issues of Avatar, were apparently among the later of the Bosstown bands to begin playing locally.

Critics were generally more lenient toward the non-MGM bands, particularly Earth Opera, Eden's Children, and the Bagatelle. However, the overall harsh assessment of Bosstown as both bad promotion and bad music quickly became

orthodoxy and is the usual framework used in the terse dismissal of the subject in subsequent accounts.[12]

In contrast to this negative view, the mainstream press actually abetted MGM's hype, most notoriously in an anonymous Newsweek story that predated the release of MGM's initial Bosstown records. The story spoke flatteringly of individual bands and the overall scene, emphasized the collegiate background of the bands and audience, and played up the music's cerebral appeal (what Landau would call pretentiousness). The article also ratified the "Bosstown" moniker.[13]

Richard Goldstein's article in Vogue elaborated further on the collegiate/cerebral angle.[14] Even the Wall Street Journal covered the Bosstown Sound, running a story that focused on MGM's marketing of Ultimate Spinach. As unilluminating as the article was, it removed any lingering doubts that hype and marketing were by this time the real Bosstown story.[15]

It fell once again to the rock press to publish a post mortem summation of the Bosstown Sound. Robert Somma's article in Fusion provided a comprehensive, although rambling, historical account which focused on the marketing effort, media response, the role of MGM Records and Boston radio stations such as WBZ, and the reasons for the commercial failure of the Bosstown Sound. Among the latter were the anti-Bosstown backlash and the failure of bands such as Ultimate Spinach to live up to the expectations created by MGM's publicity.[16]

Somma also touches on managerial and financial troubles at MGM Records. These were a problem during the Bosstown debacle and became crises in 1969, resulting in the appointment of the flamboyant Mike Curb, then 25 years old, as President of MGM Records. Within a year, Curb, who later became a Reaganite politician, caused a stir in the music industry by announcing that MGM was dropping 18 unspecified pro-drug recording acts, including three chart LP bands. Rolling Stone pointed out that MGM did not have three chart LP groups to cut,

and speculated that Curb's announcement was nothing more than a publicity stunt. An additional speculation was that some of the 18 acts might be bands from the Bosstown Sound still under contract to MGM.[17] This seems unlikely, since none of MGM's Bosstown bands had released a record anyway since 1969 at the latest, and none have ever been linked, to my knowledge, with use or advocacy of drugs.

Viewed in this slightly larger context, the Bosstown Sound can be seen as one episode in a comedy of errors at MGM. In light of this, the Bosstown bands deserve more sympathy than they have received. The current revival and rerelease of 1960s punk and psychedelic records has so far passed over the Bosstown Sound, except for the recent rerelease of the first two Ultimate Spinach albums. Lack of interest in the Bosstown bands is an unfortunate oversight, although understandable given critical orthodoxy on the subject. The Bosstown records are ripe for reexamination. Many of them are as good as the critics' favorite rock albums from the late 1960s.

The Bands and Records

Newsweek's article on the Bosstown Sound noted that "[h]owever diverse, the Boston groups are held together by their general folk orientation, their subdued, artful electronic sound, an insistence on clear, understandable lyrics, the spice of dissonance and the infusion of classical textures."[18] For the most part this is an accurate description and therefore a useful definition of the Bosstown Sound as a musical genre.

Despite the view of some skeptics noted above, that there was no such thing as a Bosstown Sound, there was at least as much musical coherence among the Bosstown bands as there was, say, among such Chicago rock contemporaries as the Buckinghams, New Colony Six, and Shadows of Knight. If rock is really "the sound of the city," and if that phrase really means what it seems to, then Boston rock is a valid category, and the Bosstown Sound is an incomparably

discrete subcategory. It is also surprisingly rich, as a close examination of the bands and records of the Bosstown Sound reveals.

What follows is as complete a list as I can provide at this point. I have copies of the records, except where noted by asterisk. Information on chart action is taken from Joel Whitburn's books.[19] Discographical and personnel information comes from record jackets, works previously cited, and additional reference works.[20] Songwriting credits are listed in parentheses. Names are spelled as they appear on album covers and record labels.

I. The Apple Pie Motherhood Band.

A. LPs.

1. **The Apple Pie Motherhood Band**, Atlantic SD 8189, 1968. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1

1. "Born Under a Bad Sign" (Booker T. Jones, William Bell)
2. "I'd Like to Know" (David Blue)
3. "Ice" (Ted Demos, Marilyn Lundquist)
4. "Yesterday's New Song" (Jeff Labes)
5. "Barnaby's Madness" (Richard Barnaby)

b. Side 2

1. "The Ultimate" (Dick Barnaby, Jackie Bruno, Joe Castagno, Ted Demos, Jeff Labes)
   "Contact" (Alan Gordon, Gary Bonner)
2. "The Way It Feels" (Jeff Labes)
3. "Bread and Jam" (Dick Barnaby, Jackie Bruno, Joe Castagno, Ted Demos, Jeff Labes)
4. "Apple Pie" (Jeff Labes)
5. "Variations on a Fingernail" (Jeff Labes)

c. Members

Jeff Labes, organ, piano
Ted Demos, lead guitar
Joe Castagno, rhythm guitar
Jackie Bruno, drums
Richard Barnaby, bass

d. Other credits

All arrangements by the Apple Pie Motherhood Band.
Recording engineer: Wiley C. Brooks.
Album photography and cover design: Joel Brodsky.
"Apple Pie" produced by Felix Pappalardi.

All other selections produced by Marvin Lagunoff.
A Pilgrim Production.

e. Liner notes
Liner notes refer to Boss Town and the Boston Sound and point out that all band members are singers.

2. **Apple Pie**, Atlantic SD 8233, 1969. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Orangutang" (Michael Sorafine)
2. "I Just Want to Make Love to You" (Willie Dixon)
3. "Brown Eyed Handsome Man" (Chuck Berry)
4. "Grandmother Hooker" (Michael Sorafine)

b. Side 2
1. "Get Ready" (William Robinson)
2. "Super Music Man" (Jeff Labes)
3. "Gypsy" (Ted Demos)
4. "He Turned You On" (Michael Sorafine, Don Henny)

c. Members
Bruce Paine, vocals
Michael Sorafine, guitar, vocals
Ted Demos, guitars, vocals
Adam Myers, harmonica, vocals
Dick Barnaby, bass guitar, bamboo flute
Jef Labes, keyboards
Jack Bruno, drums

d. Other credits
Recording engineer: William Arlt.
Album design: Edgar Blakeney.
Backliner photos: Michael Pomerantz.
Produced by Tom Dowd.

e. Liner notes
None.

B. Single.

*1. "Long Live Apple Pie"/"Flight Path," Atlantic 2477, 1968. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

According to Goldstein, the Apple Pie Motherhood Band was previously called the Sacred Mushrooms, and before that C.C. and the Chasers. None of these names appear in Avatar, but a band called the Mushroom is promoted in a Boston Tea Party ad. I know of no other published references to this band.

The Apple Pie Motherhood Band's albums demonstrate that they were talented instrumentalists but not very good songwriters. They were at their best when performing others' material or when jamming. The second album drops

almost all psychedelic trappings in favor of noisy hard rock. Neither album is anything out of the ordinary.

II. **The Bagatelle.**

A. LP.

1. **11 PM Saturday**, ABC ABCS-646, September 1968. Chart action: none. No songwriter credits listed.

a. Side 1
1. "Soul Man"
2. "Got to Get You Into My Life"
3. "Shake"
4. "Mashed Potatoes" ["Land of 1000 Dances"]
5. "Such a Fuss About Sunday"
6. "Hey You"
7. "I'm Losin' You"
8. "Back on the Farm"

b. Side 2
1. "Every Night"
2. "Everybody Knows"
3. "I've Been Trying"
4. "I Can't Stand It"
5. "I Feel Good"

Medley:
"Getting Ready"
"Please Please Please"
"Gloria"
"One Summer Night"
"Crying in the Chapel"
"In the Still of the Night"
"I Only Have Eyes for You"
"For Your Love"

c. Members
Fred Griffith, vocals
Rodney Young, vocals
David "Redtop" Thomas, vocals
Willie Alexander, vocals, piano, percussion
Steve Schrell, saxophone, flute
Mark Gould, trumpet
David "Turk" Bynoe, bass
Marshall O'Connor, guitar
Lee Mason, leader, drums

d. Other credits
Recording engineer: Ed Greene.
Remix engineer: Gary Kellgren.
Arrangements by the Bagatelle and Larry Fallon.
Sculpture in cover photo by Agostini.
Representation: Mark D. Joseph, Reluctant Management.
A Rasputin Production by Tom Wilson.

e. Liner notes
A few lines of nonsense by Paul Williams of Crawdaddy.

B. Single.

*1. "Such a Fuss About Sunday"/"What Can I Do," ABC 11063, September 1968. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

The Bagatelle was an interracial band (five whites, four blacks) that mixed jazz arrangements, horn-based soul, and 1950s- and gospel-style vocal group harmony. Their LP appears to be a live recording at a club, subsequently sweetened (unnecessarily) in a few spots with strings. It is easy to tell that this was an exciting live band, but the recording seems somewhat flat and probably does not do justice to the band.

III. **The Beacon Street Union.**

A. LPs.

1. **The Eyes of the Beacon Street Union**, MGM E-4517 (mono), MGM SE-4517 (stereo), March 1968. Chart action: entered 3-9-68, peak 75, 16 weeks.

a. Side 1
1. "Recitation"
2. "My Love Is" (Ulaky)
3. "Beautiful Delilah" (Berry)
4. "Sportin' Life" (Beacon Street Union)
5. "Four Hundred and Five" (Ulaky, Wright, Tartachny, Weisberg, Rhodes, Farrell)
6. "Mystic Mourning" (Ulaky, Weisberg, Rhodes)

b. Side 2
1. "Sadie Said No" (Ulaky, Wright)
2. "Speed Kills" (Ulaky, Wright)
3. "Blue Avenue" (Ulaky)
4. "South End Incident" (Ulaky)
5. "Green Destroys the Gold" (Ulaky)
6. "The Prophet" (Ulaky, Wright)

c. Members.
Not listed.

d. Other credits.
Recitation by Tom Wilson, written by Robert Pomerene.
Produced by Wes Farrell, a Coral Rock Production.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Engineers: George Schowerer, Mirasound Studios; Gary Kellgren, Mayfair Studios.

e. Liner notes.

Robert Pomerene's silly "Recitation," read by Tom Wilson to open Side 1, is printed inside the gatefold cover.

2. **The Clown Died in Marvin Gardens**, MGM SE-4568, August 1968. Chart action: entered 9-14-68, peak 173, 10 weeks.

a. Side 1

1. "The Clown Died in Marvin Gardens" (Ulaky, Wright)
2. "The Clown's Overture" (Fallon)
3. "Angus of Aberdeen" (Ulaky, Weisberg)
4. "Blue Suede Shoes" (Perkins)
5. "A Not Very August Afternoon" (Wright, Tartachny, Weisberg, Rhodes)
6. "Now I Taste the Tears" (Clifford)

b. Side 2

1. "King of the Jungle" (Wright, Tartachny, Weisberg)
2. "May I Light Your Cigarette" (Ulaky, Wright)
3. "Baby Please Don't Go" (this is a Muddy Waters song, but is credited on the album to Wright, Rhodes, Weisberg, Tartachny, and Ulaky)

c. Members

John Lincoln Wright, vocals
Robert Rhodes, keyboards, brass
Richard Weisberg, percussion
Wayne Ulaky, bass guitar
Paul Tartachny, lead and rhythm guitar

d. Other credits

Produced by Wes Farrell.
A Coral Rock Production.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover photo: Joel Brodsky.
Liner photo: David Hoff.
Art direction: Acy R. Lehman.
Orchestrations: Lary Fallon.
Technical assistance: Gary Kellgreen, Eddie Kramer and the Record Plant.

e. Liner notes

None.

B. Singles.

*1. "South End Incident"/"Speed Kills," MGM 13865, March 1968 (according to Roxon), or 1967 (according to Tortelli). Chart action: none.

*2. "Blue Suede Shoes"/"Four Hundred and Five," MGM 13935, August 1968. Chart action: none.

*3. "Mayola"/"May I Light Your Cigarette," MGM 14012, November

1968 (according to Roxon), or 1969 (according to Tortelli). Chart action: none.

*4. "Lord Why Is It So Hard"/"Can't Find My Fingers," RTP 10011, 1969. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

The Beacon Street Union has a reputation as a very good live band that never quite clicked in the studio. Their albums are uneven, ranging from hardhitting punkadelic ("Blue Avenue") to gimmicky novelties ("Speed Kills"), from ludicrous orchestral excess ("The Clown's Overture") to rather likable instrumental jam excess (the 16-minute "Baby Please Don't Go"). The Union were at their best when they tried to be tough and not profound, which was not often enough. The melodramatic "South End Incident," reportedly controversial when it was released as a single, has not worn well. Overall, it seems that the Beacon Street Union were a punkadelic band without clear vision, caught in a commercial environment that too often led them to act on their own, and their producer's, bad ideas. Still, they were surprisingly good musicians, and their albums have many enjoyable moments (outside of their interest as period pieces). A later version of the band recorded under the name Eagle (see below).

IV. **Bo Grumpus.**

A. LP.

*1. **Before the War**, Atco 33-246, 1968. Chart action: none.

B. Singles: none.

C. Discussion.

This band is mentioned in the Goldstein article. A later version recorded under the name Jolliver Arkansaw (see below). To date, I have been unable to obtain Bo Grumpus's LP.

V. **Eagle.**

A. LP.

1. **Come Under Nancy's Tent**, Janus JLS 3011, 1970. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Pack Up" (B. Rhodes, J. Wright)
2. "Come In, It's All for Free" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)
3. "Brown Hair" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)
4. "Dance On Little Beauty" (J. Wright)
5. "City Girl" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)

b. Side 2
1. "Kickin' It Back to You" (R. Rhodes, J. Wright)
2. "Separated" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)

3. "We Got a Good Thing Goin'" (unknown)
   "Get a Hit and Run" (J. James)
4. "Snake in the Grass" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)
5. "Comin' Home Day" (J. Wright, W. Ulaky)

c. Members
Not listed on cover.

Hounsome lists:

J. James, guitar, vocals
Robert Rhodes, keyboards, horns
Wayne Ulaky, bass
John Wright, vocals

Tortelli lists:

John Wright, vocals
Richard Weisberg, drums
Wayne Ulaky, guitar
Bobby Hastings, bass

d. Other credits
Produced by Wes Farrell for Coral Rock Productions, Inc.
Album cover design: Maurer Productions.
Cover photo: Music Hall Theatre, Boston.
Photographs: Steve Hansen, Boston.
Management: Eagle Rock Management.
Album Coordinator: Dorothy Schwartz.
Production Coordinator: Bob Scerbo.

e. Liner notes

Quote by John Kreidl, Vibrations magazine (a Boston-based music publication which I have not been able to examine): "You can advance backwards or retreat forward. John Wright is a man who thinks about the last word."

B. Singles.

*1. "Kicking It Back to You"/"Come In, It's All for Free," Janus 113, 1970. Chart action: none.

*2. "Working Man"/"Brown Hair," Janus 135, 1970. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

This reconstituted version of the Beacon Street Union followed the formula of late 1960s/early 1970s hard rock. The album is competently done but undistinctive.

VI. **Earth Opera.**

A. LPs.

1. **Earth Opera**, Elektra EKS-74016, March 1968. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Peter Rowan)
1. "The Red Sox Are Winning"
2. "As It Is Before"
3. "Dreamless"
4. "To Care at All"
5. "Home of the Brave"

b. Side 2
1. "The Child Bride" (Peter Rowan)
2. "Close Your Eyes and Shut the Door" (Peter Rowan)
3. "Time and Again" (Peter Rowan, David Grisman)
4. "When You Were Full of Wonder" (Peter Rowan)
5. "Death by Fire" (Peter Rowan)

c. Members
Peter Rowan, vocals, guitar
David Grisman, mandocello, mandolin
John Nagy, bass
Bill Stevenson, piano, organ, vibes, harpsichord
Paul Dillon, drums

d. Other credits
Billy Mundi and Warren Smith, drums and percussion.
Produced by Peter K. Siegel.
Production Supervisor: Jac Holzman.
Recording engineers: Dave Sanders, Roy Cicala.
Mixing: Peter K. Siegel.
Cover construction: Abe Gurvin.
Cover photography: Joel Brodsky.
Cover concept and art direction: William S. Harvey.

e. Liner notes
Song lyrics are printed inside Unipak gatefold.

2. **The Great American Eagle Tragedy**, Elektra EKS-74038, March 1969. Chart action: entered 3-22-69, peak 181, 4 weeks.

a. Side 1
1. "Home to You" (Peter Rowan)
2. "Mad Lydia's Waltz" (Peter Rowan)
3. "Alfie Finney" (Paul Dillon)
4. "Sanctuary from the Law" (Peter Rowan)
5. "All Winter Long" (Peter Rowan)

b. Side 2 (all songs written by Peter Rowan)
1. "The American Eagle Tragedy"
2. "Roast Beef Love"
3. "It's Love"

c. Members

Peter Rowan, acoustic and electric guitars, tenor saxophone, vocals
David Grisman, mandolin, mandocello, piano, alto saxophone, vocals
Paul Dillon, drums, acoustic guitar, percussion, vocals
John Nagy, electric bass, cello, mandocello

d. Other credits

Guest musicians: Jack Bonus, Richard Grando, John Cale, Dave Horowitz, Bill Keith, Herb Bushler, Bob Zachary.
Manager: Bob Zachary.
Produced by Peter K. Siegel.
Production Supervisor: Jac Holzman.
Engineering: Dave Sanders, Peter K. Siegel.
Recorded at A&R Studios and Elektra Sound Recorders, New York.
Collage: David Grisman, Myron Collins.
Photos by Myron Collins.
Color illustration: Gene Szafran.
Design: Robert L. Heimall.
Art direction: William S. Harvey.

e. Liner notes

None.

B. Single.

*1. "Home to You"/"Alfie Finney," Elektra 45650, 1969. Chart action: "Home to You" entered 4-26-69, peak 97, 1 week.

C. Discussion.

Despite their psychedelic album covers, Earth Opera played country rock (with touches of folk and jazz) that was usually pleasant and seldom exciting. The band sometimes seems to be straining to sound down homey and laid back. The songwriting is similarly contrived, with too many changes in rhythm. Singer Peter Rowan often sounds like Don McLean, only whinier. Some songs are arrestingly atmospheric ("The Child Bride"), and the occasional high energy numbers are generally successful (e.g. the rollicking "Sanctuary from the Law"). "The American Eagle Tragedy" is a disjointed anti-war opus, stretched to an unbearable eleven minutes. Social commentary was not the strong suit of the Bosstown Sound. All in all, Earth Opera was probably an overrated band--as unlikely as that may seem--because they were treated as exceptions in many of the anti-Bosstown diatribes.

VII. Eden's Children.

A. LPs.

1. **Eden's Children**, ABC ABC-624 (mono), ABC ABCS-624 (stereo), January 1968. Chart action: entered 3-9-68, peak 196, 2 weeks.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Richard Schamach)
1. "Knocked Out"
2. "Goodbye Girl"
3. "If She's Right"
4. "I Wonder Why"
5. "Stone Fox"
6. "My Bad Habit"

b. Side 2
1. "Just Let Go" (Richard Schamach)
2. "Out Where the Light Fish Live" (Richard Schamach)
3. "Don't Tell Me" (James Edwards)

c. Members
Jimmy Sturman, drums
Larry Kiley, bass
Richard (Sham) Schamach, guitar, vocals

d. Other credits
Produced by Bob Thiele.
Engineer: Eddie Brackett.
Cover and liner photos: Ira Glaser.
Cover design: Robert and Barbara Flynn/Viceroy.
Liner design: Joe Lebow.
Dedicated to Gordon Dinerstein, Harry Carter, Paul Maged.

e. Liner notes
Gatefold cover contains lengthy biographical and musicological discourse by Frank Kofsky, emphasizing the band's jazz tendencies. Also included are the lyrics for all the songs on the album.

2. **Sure Looks Real**, ABC ABCS-652, 1968. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Sure Looks Real" (Richard Schamach)
2. "Toasted" (L. Kiely, Jr.)
3. "Spirit Call" (Richard Schamach)
4. "Come When I Call" (Richard Schamach)
5. "Awakening" (Richard Schamach)

b. Side 2
1. "The Clock's Imagination" (Richard Schamach)
2. "Things Gone Wrong" (Richard Schamach)
3. "Wings" (L. Kiely)
4. "Call It Design" (Richard Schamach)
5. "Invitation" (Richard Schamach)
6. "Echoes" (Richard Schamach)

c. Members
Richard "Sham" Schamach, guitar, vocals, piano
Jim Sturman, drums, vocals
Larry Kiely, Jr., bass, guitar, vocals

d. Other credits
Produced by Bob Thiele, Jonathan Whitcup.
Mix and mastering: Steve Scheaffer.
Engineers: Brooks Arthur, Steve Scheaffer.
Cover and liner design: William Duevell, Henry Epstein.
Photos: Norman Trigg, Elliot Landy, David Glaser.

e. Liner notes
Brief fluff by Don Heckman of Jazz & Pop magazine.

B. Singles.

*1. "Goodbye Girl"/"Just Let Go," ABC 11053, 1968. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

Eden's Children were one of the best Bosstown bands, noted for their jazz stylings and instrumental prowess. Although they were essentially a power trio a la Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and the Who, their sound was often fuller and rather commercial, even though they were not a commercial success. Today their records still sound fresh and adventurous.

VIII. **The Ill Wind.**

A. LP.

Flashes, ABC ABCS-641, 1968. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Walkin' and Singin'" (Ken and Tom Frankel)
2. "People of the Night" (Ken and Tom Frankel) [mislabeled as "Sleep" on album cover]
3. "Little Man" (Ken and Tom Frankel)
4. "Dark World" (Ken and Tom Frankel)
5. "L.A.P.D." (Richard Griggs)

b. Side 2
1. "High Flying Bird" (Bill Edd Wheeler)
2. "Hung Up Chick" (Ken and Tom Frankel)
3. "Sleep" (Ken and Tom Frankel) [mislabeled as "People of the Night" on album cover]
4. "Full Cycle" (Ken and Tom Frankel)

c. Members
Ken Frankel, lead guitar, banjo
Richard Griggs, rhythm guitar, vocals
Carey Mann, bass, vocals
David Kinsman, drums
Connie Devanney, vocalist

d. Other credits
A Rasputin Production by Tom Wilson.

Recording engineer: Harry Yarmark.
Remix engineer: Gary Kellgren.
Cover design and photography: Bongiorno/Tervinski.
Coordinated by Mark D. Joseph, Reluctant Management, Inc.

e. Liner notes
None.

B. Single.

1. "In My Dark World" [same as "Dark World" from Flashes]/"Walkin' and Singin'," ABC 11107, 1968. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

This band is one of the undiscovered gems of the Bosstown Sound. Singer Connie Devanney is outstanding, with a timbre and delivery similar to that of the Pentangle's Jacqui McShee. When the males join in on harmony, the folk rock textures are reminiscent of the pre-Grace Slick Jefferson Airplane. "Dark World" is a haunting, beautiful song that should have been a hit.

IX. **Jolliver Arkansaw.**

A. LP.

1. **Home**, Bell 6031, 1969. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Frou Frou" (J. Hutchinson)
2. "Mr. Brennan" (J. Hutchinson, Felix Pappalardi)
3. "Bright as Fire" (J. Colegrove, R. Blake)
4. "The Eye" (J. Hutchinson)
5. "A Girl Like Mary" (J. Colegrove)
6. "Hatred Sun" (J. Hutchinson)

b. Side 2

1. "Lisa My Love" (J. Hutchinson, D. Hutchinson)
2. "Migrant Fowl" (J. Hutchinson)
3. "King Chaos" (J. Hutchinson)
4. "You Keep Me Satisfied" (J. Hutchinson)
5. "St. Justina" (J. Hutchinson)
6. "Gray Afternoon" (E. Mottau, J. Colegrove, E. Ryan, M. Ryan)

c. Members
Jim Colegrove, bass, guitar, dobro, vocals
Joe Hutchinson, guitar, vocals
Ed Mottau, guitar, vocals
Ronnie Blake, drums

d. Other credits
Assisting musicians: Leslie West, Felix Pappalardi.

Engineering: Bob d'Orleans.
Recorded at Gotham Sound Studios, NYC.
Cover photograph and album design: Philip Maitland-Kraft.
Umbrella Man: Steve Chudnoff.
Musical direction and production by Felix Pappalardi for Windfall Music Enterprises Inc.

e. Liner notes
Song lyrics are printed inside gatefold cover.

B. Single.

*1. "Lisa My Love"/"Mr. Brennan," Bell 802, 1969. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

This is a latter day version of Bo Grumpus (whose album I have not heard). After the brief "heyday" of the Bosstown Sound, several of the surviving bands took a sharp turn toward what would later be called album-oriented rock (AOR). Jolliver Arkansaw, Eagle, and the Apple Pie Motherhood Band are all in this category. Of the three, the best is Jolliver Arkansaw, who bring sufficient finesse and texture to the form to stand out from the hundreds of bands who cranked out AOR in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jolliver Arkansaw probably benefitted greatly from their association with Leslie West and Felix Pappalardi. Several songs on the album sound similar to the work of West and Pappalardi's later aggregation, Mountain.

X. **Orpheus.**

A. LPs.

1. **Orpheus**, MGM E-4524 (mono), MGM SE-4524 (stereo), 1968. Chart action: entered 3-9-68, peak 119, 14 weeks.

a. Side 1
1. "I've Never Seen Love Like This" (Arnold, Gulliksen)
2. "Lesley's World" (L. Miller, B. Miller)
3. "Congress Alley" (Martin)
4. "Music Machine" (Martin)
5. "Door Knob Song" (Martin)

b. Side 2
1. "I'll Stay with You" (Arnold, Gulliksen)
2. "Can't Find the Time to Tell You" (Arnold)
3. "Never in My Life" (Arnold)
4. "The Dream" (Arnold)

c. Members
Bruce Arnold, vocals, lead guitar
Jack McKenes, vocals, guitar
John Eric Gulliksen, vocals, bass
Harry Sandler, drums, percussion

d. Other credits
Produced and arranged by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Engineer: Eddie Smith, Bell Sound Studios, Inc.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Direction: International Career Consultants.
Cover and liner photo: Stephen Lorber.

e. Liner notes
None.

2. **Ascending**, MGM SE-4569, 1968. Chart action: entered 9-28-68, peak 159, 12 weeks.

a. Side 1
1. "I'll Fly" (Bruce Arnold)
2. "Just Got Back" (Steve Martin)
3. "Mine's Yours" (Bruce Arnold)
4. "Don't Be So Serious" (Bruce Arnold)
5. "So Far Away in Love" (Bruce Arnold)
6. "She's Not There" (Rod Argent)

b. Side 2
1. "Love Over Here" (Bruce Arnold, Eric Gulliksen)
2. "Borneo" (arranged by Orpheus)
3. "Just a Little Bit" (Bruce Arnold)
4. "Walk Away Renee" (Brown, Sansone, Calilli)
5. "Roses" (Eric Gulliksen)
6. "Magic Air" (Harold Sandler)

c. Members
Eric Gulliksen, bass, vocals
Jack McKenes, guitar, vocals
Bruce Arnold, guitar, vocals
Harry Sandler, drums, vocals

d. Other credits
Produced and arranged by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Eddie Smith, Mayfair Recording Studios, Inc.
Liner photo: Stephen Lorber.
Liner selection: Eric Gulliksen.
Management: International Career Consultants, Inc.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover photo: John Murello.
Art direction: Acy R. Lehman.
Orpheus Fan Club: TAJ, 1618 Salem Road, Valley Stream, Long Island 11580.

e. Liner notes
A silly poem by Eric Gulliksen.

3. **Joyful**, MGM SE-4599, 1969. Chart action: entered 10-1-69, peak 198, 1 week.

a. Side 1
1. "By the Size of My Shoes" (L. Weiss, J. Williams)
2. "Me About You" (Gary Bonner, Alan Gordon)
3. "May I Look at You" (Bruce Arnold)
4. "To Touch Our Love Again" (Bruce Arnold, Eric Gulliksen)
5. "Lovin' You" (Bruce Arnold, Eric Gulliksen, Jack McKenes)

b. Side 2
1. "Brown Arms in Houston" (Lesley Miller, Joe Henry)
2. "As They All Fall" (Bruce Arnold)
3. "I Can Make the Sun Rise" (Bruce Arnold, Eric Gulliksen)
4. "Joyful" (Bruce Arnold, Eric Gulliksen)
5. "Of Enlightenment" (Bruce Arnold)

c. Members
Harry Sandler, drums, percussion, vocals
Jack McKenes, rhythm guitar, vocals
Bruce Arnold, acoustic and electric guitars, vocals
Eric Gulliksen, bass/bass guitar, vocals

d. Other credits
Produced and arranged by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Eddie Smith, Mayfair Studios, NYC.
Director of engineering: Val Valentin.
Liner photo: Stephen Lorber.
Management: International Career Consultants, Inc.
Cover photo: Moscati.
Art direction: Dick Smith.
Special thanks to the Brothers Swan.

e. Liner notes
Short poem by Eric Gulliksen.

4. **Orpheus**, Bell 6061, 1971. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Steve Martin)
1. "Big Green Pearl"
2. "Monkey Demon"
3. "It Gets Worse Every Time"
4. "I Wanna Be Your Lover"
5. "Nunnery"
6. "By the Way"

b. Side 2
1. "Sweet Life" (Bruce Martin, Steve Martin, Elliott Sherman)
2. "Tomorrow Man" (Steve Martin)
3. "Rainbow Peddler" (Steve Martin)
4. "I'll Be There" (Steve Martin)
5. "Big Green Pearl" (Steve Martin)

c. Members
Bruce Arnold, vocals, guitars
Steve Martin, vocals
Elliot Sherman, piano, clavinet
Howard Hersh, bass
K.P. Burke, harmonica
Bernard Purdie, drums

d. Other credits
Recording engineer: Fred Weinberg, A&R Studios, NYC.
Album photography and design: Zipper Works.
Produced by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.

e. Liner notes
None.

B. Singles.

*1. "Can't Find the Time"/"Lesley's World," MGM 13882, 1968. Chart action: "Can't Find the Time" entered 8-23-69, peak 80, 7 weeks.

*2. "I've Never Seen Love Like This"/"Congress Alley," MGM 13947, 1968. Chart action: none.

*3. "Brown Arms in Houston"/"I Can Make the Sun Rise," MGM 14022, 1969. Chart action: "Brown Arms in Houston" entered 5-31-69, peak 91, 3 weeks.

*4. "By the Size of My Shoes"/"Joyful," MGM 14139, 1969. Chart action: none.

*5. "Big Green Pearl"/"Sweet Life," Bell 45128, 1971. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

Orpheus was a soft rock/easy listening band which dabbled in country rock on its fourth and last album. The first three albums are virtually indistinguishable from each other. Damned with faint praise by Jon Landau for being "good schlock," Orpheus's records today sound like an uneasy combination of the Association, Tommy James and the Shondells, Climax, and Perry Como. Occasionally, their annoyingly pleasant norm is interrupted by a more memorable song like "Congress Alley," which at least is delivered with more energy than the band customarily musters.

Together with Ultimate Spinach, Orpheus was under the wing of New York producer Alan Lorber, a man reportedly responsible for a number of major hits prior to the Bosstown promotion. I have not been able to discover anything about these earlier hits, but Lorber definitely seems to have had a commercial orientation which shaped the image and sound of Orpheus. The image was psychedelic, as reflected in the distorted photographs on their first two album covers. Meanwhile, the sound was syrupy soft

rock.

XI. **Phluph.**

A. LP.

1. **Phluph**, Verve V6-5054, 1968. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "Doctor Mind" (Blake IV)
2. "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" (Dylan)
3. "In Her Way" (Blake IV)
4. "Another Day" (Blake IV)
5. "Girl in Tears" (Pell)

b. Side 2
1. "Ellyptical Machine" (Blake IV)
2. "Lovely Lady" (Maisano)
3. "Death of a Nation" (Blake IV)
4. "Love Eyes" (Pell)
5. "Patterns" (Blake IV)

c. Members (instruments unspecified)
Benson Blake IV
Lee Dudley
John Pell
Joel Maisano

d. Other credits
A Bornwin Production.
Produced by Dan Elliot.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover and liner photos: Richard Blinkoff.
Art direction: Acy R. Lehman.

e. Liner notes

The notes include an inane pseudo-poem, mixed with marketing slogans: "Cambridge comes and conquers. Phluph has fired the sound heard 'round the world. The British (and San Francisco) are on the run. Phluph, the first Boston group recorded by a major recording company [Verve, a subsidiary of MGM], is the originator not the imitator." The notes also quote a laudatory review from Cashbox magazine.

B. Single.

*1. "Another Day"/"Doctor Mind," Verve 10564, 1968. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

Phluph's album is astonishingly good. The musicianship is excellent,

the original songs are well crafted, and the sound is a bold, experimental punkadelic, with echoes of the Five Americans in the vocals and the Animals and Music Machine in the instrumentation. The organist is particularly impressive.

XII. **Puff.**

A. LP.

1. Puff, MGM SE-4622, 1969. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Ronn Campisi)
1. "Dead Thoughts of Alfred"
2. "Rainy Day"
3. "Vacuum"
4. "Walk Upon the Water"
5. "Who Do You Think You Are"
6. "Of Not Being Able to Go to Sleep"

b. Side 2 (all songs written by Ronn Campisi)
1. "When I Wake Up in the Morning"
2. "Trees"
3. "It's My Way"
4. "I Sure Need You"
5. "Go With You"
6. "Changes"

c. Members
Vin Campisi, lead guitar
Jim Mandell, piano, organ, flute, vocals
David-Allen Ryan, bass, vocals
Robert Henderson, drums, vocals

d. Other credits
Produced by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Eddie Smith, Mayfair Studios, NYC.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover photo: Joel Brodsky.
Art direction: David E. Krieger.
Puff Fan Club: P.O. Box 47, Boston, Mass.

e. Liner notes
None.

B. Single.

*1. "Looking in My Window"/"Rainy Day," MGM 14040, 1969. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

Puff came to my attention through an ad in Goldmine which listed them as a Bosstown band. The Lorber and MGM connections and the Boston fan club address support the assumption that they were part of the Bosstown

Sound, but I have no independent confirmation of this.[21]

Puff's album is weak. The songs are pretentious and dull for the most part, while the performance of the band is competent but lacking in flair. Stylistically, Puff combines elements of Phluph-like punkadelic and Orpheus-style pop, with a result that often borders on bubblegum, somewhat on the order of Innocence or Sopwith Camel.

XIII. Ultimate Spinach.

A. LPs.

1. **Ultimate Spinach**, MGM E-4518 (mono), MGM SE-4518 (stereo), March 1968. Chart action: entered 2-24-68, peak 34, 24 weeks.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Ian Bruce-Douglas)
1. "Ego Trip"
2. "Sacrifice of the Moon" (in four parts)
3. "Plastic Raincoats/Hung-Up Minds"
4. "(Ballad of the) Hip Death Goddess"

b. Side 2 (all songs written by Ian Bruce-Douglas)
1. "Your Head Is Reeling"
2. "Dove in Hawk's Clothing"
3. "Baroque #1"
4. "Funny Freak Parade"
5. "Pamela"

c. Members
Ian Bruce-Douglas, vocals, electric piano, electric harpsichord, organ, harpsichord, 12-string guitar, sitar, harmonica, wood flute, theremin, celeste
Barbara Hudson, vocals, electric guitar, hollow body guitar, kazoo
Keith Lahteinen, vocals, drums, tabla, bass drum, assorted bells, chimes
Richard Nese, bass, feedback bass
Geoffrey Winthrop, vocals, lead guitar, feedback guitar, drone sitar, electric sitar

d. Other credits
Arrangements by Ian Bruce-Douglas.
Produced by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Harry Yarmark, Bell Sound Studios.
Management: Amphion Co.
Direction: International Career Consultants.
Cover concept: David Jenks.
Cover art and design: Richard Sauter.
Dedicated to Kenneth Patchen, Dick Summer.

e. Liner notes
The album has sprawling, cosmic liner notes attributed to Ian Bruce-Douglas, filled with phrases like: "Ultimate

Spinach is mind food . . . let the music reach into your depths with a candle and light up what has been dark for too long . . . take what we give you, because we give it totally for you, but protect our gift, keep it close to you, and above all, let us help you find your own real beauty, so that others, in turn, may grow beautiful in your presence."

2. **Behold & See**, MGM SE-4570, June 1968 (Roxon's date, probably too early). Chart action: entered 11-9-68, peak 198, 2 weeks.

a. Side 1 (all songs written by Ian Bruce-Douglas)
1. "Gilded Lamp of the Cosmos"
2. "Visions of Your Reality"
3. "Jazz Thing"
4. "Mind Flowers"

b. Side 2 (all songs written by Ian Bruce-Douglas)
1. "Where You're At"
2. "Suite: Genesis of Beauty" (in four parts)
3. "Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse"
4. "Fragmentary March of Green"

c. Members
Not listed.

d. Other credits
Arrangements by Ian Bruce-Douglas.
Produced by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Harry Yarmark, Mayfair Recording Studios, Inc.
Director of Engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover/liner art: David Jenks.
Management: Amphion Co.
Direction: International Career Consultants, Inc.
Art direction: Acy R. Lehman.
Ultimate Spinach Fan Club: c/o Janet North, Claudia Hutton, 17 Evergreen Road, Acton, Mass. 01720.

e. Liner notes
None.

3. **Ultimate Spinach**, MGM SE-4600, 1969. Chart action: none.

a. Side 1
1. "(Just Like) Romeo & Juliet" (R. Wylie, T. Williams)
2. "Some-Days You Just Can't Win" (Ted Myers, Tony Scheuren)
3. "Daisy" (Jeff Baxter)
4. "Sincere" (Ted Myers)
5. "Eddie's Rush" (Ultimate Spinach)

b. Side 2
1. "Strange-Life Tragicomedy" (Ted Myers, Tony Scheuren)

2. "Reasons" (Tony Scheuren)
3. "Happiness Child" (Ted Myers)
4. "Back Door Blues" (Ted Myers)
5. "The World Has Just Begun" (Ted Myers, Tony Scheuren)

c. Members

Jeff Baxter, lead guitar, steel and bowed guitars, vibes, vocals
Barbara Hudson, guitar, vocals
Mike Levine, bass
Russ Levine, drums
Ted Myers, vocals, guitar
Tony Scheuren, organ, piano, acoustic guitar, vocals

d. Other credits

Produced by Alan Lorber for Alan Lorber Productions, Inc.
Recording engineer: Eddie Smith, Mayfair Studios, New York City.
Director of engineering: Val Valentin.
Cover art: David Wilcox.
Liner photo: David Jenks.
Art direction: D. Krieger, R. Smith.
Management: Amphion, 240 Huntington Ave., Boston, Mass.
Special thanks to Tom Caulfield and to Aengus Ent.
Dedicated to Billy Pollard.

e. Liner notes

None.

B. Single.

*1. "(Just Like) Romeo and Juliet"/"Some Days You Just Can't Win," MGM 14023, 1969. Chart action: none.

C. Discussion.

Ultimate Spinach was the ultimate Bosstown band, bringing together three quintessential elements: MGM Records, producer Alan Lorber, and psychedelic pretentiousness. Combining all this, they still somehow managed to make three good albums.

They began as Underground Cinema, but this was too tame a name. Resident genius Ian Bruce-Douglas Wise also changed his name, dropping the "Wise." Although Bruce-Douglas was quite the auteur on the first two albums, the band survived his departure surprisingly well for their their and final album.

Their albums, especially the first, are psychobabble-delic, with a vegetarian sensitivity that today seems funny, charming, and ridiculous. The music often resembles Strawberry Alarm Clock, Country Joe and the Fish, and Jefferson Airplane. Spinach singer Barbara Hudson sometimes sounds like Jefferson Airplane's Grace Slick (but usually weaker), and on the excellent "Happiness Child" from the third Ultimate Spinach album (as well as on other songs), the unidentified male singer sounds very

much like Jefferson Airplane's Paul Kantner.

One reason cited for the decline of Ultimate Spinach, and the Bosstown Sound in general, was lack of talent. The charitable way to put this is that "[t]hey [Ultimate Spinach] were brought along much too fast . . ." More bluntly put, "[i]t seems clear enough . . . even to the individuals directly involved, that Ultimate Spinach could not cut its bookings."[22] The records seem to bear out the assumption that the level of musicianship in Ultimate Spinach was not as high as that of Eden's Children, Phluph, or the Beacon Street Union. On the other hand, the playing is at worst adequate, and the singing is usually quite good. The songs are interesting and diverse, and the production is excessive in a way that I find endearing (in contrast to the otiose excesses of Orpheus and the Beacon Street Union). When the elements all come together properly, the results are quite pleasing, as in "Ego Trip," "Jazz Thing," and "Happiness Child," to pick one standout cut from each album. Of the three best known Bosstown bands (Ultimate Spinach, Orpheus, and the Beacon Street Union), Ultimate Spinach is without a doubt the one that most deserves a hearing today.

XIV. Unrecorded bands.

The following bands were, to the best of my knowledge, part of the Boston rock scene at the time of the Bosstown Sound. I take their names from the magazine articles I have previously cited, and from club ads in Avatar. As far as I know, none of these bands issued any recordings.

Thee Argo Group
The Bait-shop
The Bead Game (a band by this name recorded for Avco Embassy in the early 1970s; I assume they are a different band)
Butter
The Cambridge Electric Opera Co.
Catharsis
Central Park Zoo
The Children of God
Children of Paradise
The Cloud
The Colt Brothers Conception
The Electric Organ
Faith
The Ferris Wheel
The Freeborne
The Fudgeballs
J. Geils Blues Band
The Grass Menagerie
The Hallucinations
The Lords
The Mushroom (see my discussion of the Apple Pie Motherhood Band)
The 90th Congress
The Ones (sometimes referred to as One; I assume this is a different group from the band or bands whose records appear on the Columbia, Kapp, Grunt, and Starborne labels)
The Ragamuffins

The Street Choir

Goldstein lists the Improper Bostonians as a Bosstown band. I exclude them because they seem to fit more properly in the punk movement. Similarly, the Big Three (apparently the trio of James Hendricks, Cass Elliott, and Tim Rose), sometimes listed as a Bosstown band, fit better in the folk category.

Conclusion

The issue one ultimately confronts in a consideration of the Bosstown Sound is that of authenticity. Were there local rock bands playing in Boston in 1967 and 1968? Based on Avatar, the answer is emphatically yes. Does this mean there was a rock music "scene"? Some of the participants refused to characterize it as such, and here numerous related issues arise: How much time, geographic proximity, and social intercourse are necessary to establish a "scene"? If there really was no Boston rock scene, why was there not? Would rock have thrived better or sooner in Boston if MGM Records had not come along?

The interloping record companies brought the Bosstown bands to New York to record. As far as I can determine, this was true in almost every case (the Bagatelle being the most likely exception). The bands, whose grounding in Boston was apparently fragile in the first place, thus lost more of their Boston identity through the process of being handled by New York-based producers. Available evidence suggests this handling and moulding were especially significant in the careers of Orpheus and the Beacon Street Union. Ultimate Spinach is a special case in that their recorded output displays fewer contradictions. Either they had very little mind of their own and were to Alan Lorber what the Archies were to Don Kirshner, or else they must have substantially believed in the mystical malarkey released under their name. The latter seems more likely, leaving Orpheus and the Beacon Street Union as the main beneficiaries, or victims, of "guidance" by their producers. Does this make them somehow worse, or more pathetic, than other Bosstown bands?

The illogic of a Boston sound manufactured in New York is obvious, but this leaves open the question of what value judgments we should make about the records that survive and the people who made them. The handy label "Bosstown Sound," contested as it was, did stick. It survives, bizarrely, as a sort of nickname-for-something-that-never-happened. This makes it all too easy to overlook not only Phluph and the Ill Wind, but even a fairly prominent band like Ultimate Spinach. In a purely aesthetic sense, none of these bands deserves to be overlooked. To stand Paul Williams on his head, just because a band was part of the Bosstown Sound does not mean it is a priori not worth listening to!

The social significance of the Bosstown Sound is harder to grasp. As a genre or movement, Bosstown is discredited, and the history of the Boston bands and their social milieu is hidden. Given these obstacles, what is the point in talking about the Bosstown Sound?

Genres and movements are necessary ideological constructions that enable us to make sense (but always a particular kind of sense) out of the thousands of films, records, novels, and other works of art that accumulate over even a brief period of time. The most common way of "making sense" of the Bosstown Sound is to treat it as the Edsel described in my introduction.

But genres and movements are also sites of conflict. When MGM, WBZ, and Newsweek wanted there to be such a thing as the Bosstown Sound, Avatar, Paul Williams, and Jon Landau did not. The fact that MGM "won" this particular battle had disastrous consequences for the bands involved and, ironically, for MGM itself. This in turn had far-reaching repercussions in the record industry and presumably in the city of Boston. The Bosstown bands were the biggest losers, but there were also winners, notably Mike Curb and, at least indirectly, a subsequent generation of Boston bands including the J. Geils Band and Aerosmith.

At a minimum, therefore, the battle of the Bosstown Sound, the "sound heard 'round the world," was an ideological struggle for control of careers, money, and a city's musical culture. In presenting my revisionist view, I seek to recast the conflict as an ongoing one whose current points of contention include the reputations of the Bosstown bands, the availability and worthiness of their recordings, and the proper role of the mass media in propagating rock music. While the first two points may seem somewhat esoteric, the last one reaches to the heart of contemporary popular culture. For record companies, radio stations, and the press are at least gatekeepers, and occasionally kingmakers. They make the business decisions which enable certain musicians to become icons--and others to land in the trash heap.

Notes

[1] Avatar, 1, No. 1, June 9-22, 1967, p. 5. My citations of Avatar are from the Underground Newspaper Collection, a series of microfilms produced by the Micro Photo Division-Bell & Howell Co. and the Underground Press Syndicate. The 1967 issues of Avatar are on Roll No. 2. The 1968 issues are on Roll No. 5. Some issues are missing on both rolls. Much of my historical account is drawn from Avatar.

[2] Eric von Schmidt and Jim Rooney, Baby, Let Me Follow You Down: The Illustrated Story of the Cambridge Folk Years (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979).

[3] See Tom Hibbert, Rare Records: Wax Trash & Vinyl Treasures (London: Proteus Books, 1982), pp. 61-63. The compilation LP New England Teen Scene contains recordings by an additional fifteen local punk bands from 1966-1967, none of whom have any noticeable connection to the Bosstown Sound. I have been unable to obtain the similar compilation LP Bay State Rock, which contains recordings by yet another three punk bands not already referred to.

[4] Paul Williams, "What Goes On," Crawdaddy, No. 15, May 1968, pp. 43-46, quote on p. 44.

[5] Joseph Tortelli, "Beacon Street Union: The Dream Died in Bosstown," Goldmine, 13, No. 26, whole number 193, December 18, 1987, pp. 20, 28.

[6] See Jim Rooney's account of the early history of the Boston Tea Party, in von Schmidt and Rooney, Baby, Let Me Follow You Down, p. 302.

[7] Ken Emerson, "Music," Avatar, No. 21, March 15-28, 1968, newspaper section, p. 10.

[8] Carl Nagin, "Doors," Avatar, New York City edition, No. 1, March 29, 1968, newspaper section, p. 7.

[9] Rusty Marcus W quoted in Ken Emerson, "The Boston Sound," Avatar, Boston

edition, No. 22, March 29, 1968, newspaper section, p. 9.

[10] Jon Landau, "Report from Boston," Crawdaddy, No. 10, July-August 1967, p. 37.

[11] Jon Landau, "The Sound of Boston: 'Kerplop,'" Rolling Stone, 1, No. 8, April 6, 1968, pp. 1, 8, 22, quotes on p. 8.

[12] For example, Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977), p. 77; Charlie Gillett, The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 354; and, somewhat more sympathetically, Ed Ward, Geoffrey Stokes, and Ken Tucker, Rock of Ages: The Rolling Stone History of Rock & Roll (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Rolling Stone Press/Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986), pp. 406-408.

[13] "Bosstown Sound," Newsweek, January 29, 1968, pp. 81-82.

[14] Richard Goldstein, "The New Boston Sound and the Rock Scholars," Vogue, February 1968, pp. 164-165, 214-215.

[15] Stanley Penn, "Selling a New Sound," Wall Street Journal, May 27, 1968, pp. 1, 17.

[16] Robert Somma, "The Boston Sound Revisited," originally published in Fusion, ca. 1969, rpt. in The Age of Rock 2, ed. Jonathan Eisen (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 219-234.

[17] "Mike Curb and Richard Nixon Battle Dopers," Rolling Stone, No. 71, November 26, 1970, pp. 1, 6.

[18] "Bosstown Sound," p. 82.

[19] Joel Whitburn, comp., Top Pop 1955-1982 (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, Inc., 1983); Joel Whitburn, comp., Top Pop Albums 1955-1985 (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 1985); and Joel Whitburn, comp., Bubbling Under the Hot 100 1959-1981 (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, Inc., 1982).

[20] Terry Hounsome, Rock Record, 3rd ed. (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987); Jerry Osborne and Bruce Hamilton, comps. Rock, Rock & Roll 45s, 4th ed. (Phoenix: O'Sullivan Woodside & Co., 1983); Neal Umphred, ed. Rock & Roll Record Albums, 1985-'86 ed. (Phoenix: O'Sullivan, Woodside & Co., 1985); Jerry Osborne, comp., Rockin' Records (Tempe, AZ: Osborne Enterprises Ltd., 1986); Lillian Roxon, Rock Encyclopedia (1969; rpt. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971); and Ken Clee, comp., The Directory of American 45 R.P.M. Records, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Stak-o-Wax, 1981).

[21] A similar case which I am assuming is not Bosstown is the eponymous album by Kangaroo (MGM SE-4586, ca. September 1968). That band included former Remains drummer N.D. Smart, but the album cover lists a New York fan club address. The producers were Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus, best known for producing the New York band Blues Magoos.

[22] Somma, "The Boston Sound Revisited," p. 231.

Other Sources on the Bosstown Sound and Related Subjects

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